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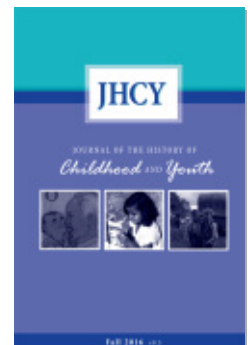
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Trauma and Pathology: Normative Crises and the Child Population in Late Tsarist Russia and the Early Soviet Union, 1904–1924

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TRAUMA AND PATHOLOGY: NORMATIVE CRISES AND THE CHILD POPULATION IN LATE TSARIST RUSSIA AND THE EARLY SOVIET UNION, 1904–1924

The first quarter of the Russian twentieth century was punctuated by a succession of cataclysmic upheavals that affected large swathes of the empire's population, striking its state structures and society to the core. These included the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) that sparked the 1905 Revolution; the First World War, which led to the fall of autocracy in February of 1917; and the October Revolution, which spiraled into a bitter civil war (1917–1922). These events were not only violently destructive and destabilizing, but also conducive to the accelerated formation of an interventionist and totalizing form of welfare/warfare statehood that involved the expansion of a range of governmental powers over a population mobilized and acted upon in mass terms.¹

In these circumstances, children became one of the most important “supports” (in the Foucauldian sense) of mass intervention. This included the enlistment of relatively new forms of knowledge, expertise, treatment, and care in explicit response to conditions experienced and represented as those of societal crisis and collapse. The following three cases in the history of childhood in Russia will be discussed in order to show what this entailed: (1) the “epidemic” of child suicides diagnosed in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution; (2) the concern of the Russian public with the detrimental psychological effect that war had on children during the First World War; and (3) Soviet efforts to deal with child “delinquency” in the early 1920s, a phenomenon generated by the mass displacements of the postrevolutionary civil war.

In examining these cases, analysis will focus on the following issues: (a) the ways in which societal collapse, prompted by violent events, such as wars or revolutions, was conducive to the construction of child pathology as a society-wide phenomenon, to be targeted through large-scale scientific and professional

interventions, both diagnostic and therapeutic; (b) the ways in which the exceptionality of such events translated into particular framings of the pathological and the deviant in childhood, so much so that children, as major supports for normative discourses and practices, came to be identified with the pathological as such; and (c) the ambiguous fusion of deviance/pathology, on the one hand, and victimhood/trauma, on the other, in the diagnostics and treatment of children affected by circumstances of mass violence and societal collapse.

THE SUICIDE CHILD, 1905–1914

In the period between the 1905 Revolution and the First World War, the Russian educated public, and the professional stratum in particular, became fascinated by what was presented by both media and experts as a veritable “epidemic of child suicides”—namely, a remarkable surge of both successful and attempted suicides by mostly teenage schoolchildren, which seemed to escalate rapidly after the 1905 Revolution, reaching, by 1909, nearly ten times the levels of 1904 (although these figures then gradually declined by the start of the First World War).² This “epidemic” was in many ways an effect of statistics itself, or rather, of the rise of professional interest in this phenomenon and of the advances made in the systematic collection of relevant data. Two parallel statistics were being created simultaneously, both by doctors interested in social hygiene: G. V. Khlopin was head of the Medical Section of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment (established in 1904) and assembled his statistics primarily from school administrative reports, while G. I. Gordon served as secretary to the Commission for the Struggle against Schoolchild Suicides of the Society for the Protection of Public Health in St. Petersburg and assembled his statistics primarily from newspaper reports, which in turn relied on police records.³

The atmosphere in which this issue was debated was highly politicized: “child suicides” (which were, in fact, suicides mostly of youth attending high schools) were presented in the context of the sociopolitical upheavals of 1905 and the government reaction that followed in subsequent years. They were construed as a major symptom of a deep-seated societal crisis, of the internal shocks that Russia was experiencing at every level.⁴ They were used, in particular, to critique certain key social institutions, especially the state-administrated, conservative, and unreformed high school. On the one hand, high school education was vital to the self-identity of imperial Russia’s still relatively small but growing and expanding middle-class professional intelligentsia—it was, arguably, *the* site of its formation as a class, even more so than the university—yet, on the other hand, high school was being consistently identified with the autocratic state and denounced as rigidly bureaucratic and arbitrarily disciplinarian.⁵

The phenomenon of "child suicides" mobilized experts in different disciplines, not only medical professionals (those working in hygiene and psychiatry, in particular), but also educators, psychologists, and jurists (especially those interested in criminal anthropology and moral statistics). They all commented on the matter extensively, usually interpreting the phenomenon in terms of wider social ills, framing them sometimes in explicitly political terms, and sometimes in terms of biosocial "degeneration."⁶ By contrast, the forensic examination of specific cases by doctors, school administrations, and the police sought to determine particular "reasons" for suicide in each case, to the extent that these could be established or hypothesized on the basis of available evidence. This involved classifying each case of suicide as belonging to some (simplified) category that could then be inserted into the statistical record.⁷

These categories usually referred to purported external conditions and resulting motives. They typically included the pressures of schoolwork and exams, home and family difficulties, or "romantic troubles" (which could imply unrequited love just as much as unwanted pregnancy). The forensic verdicts rarely went into either depth or detail. However, the category that became the most prominent in the course of the 1900s, and especially in the context of the post-1905 statistical surge or "epidemic," was psychopathology, however vaguely and nontechnically labeled and applied in practice. Mental state aberrations were usually co-diagnosed with various anthropometric abnormalities or sickness of one kind or another and were often associated with "heredity" (i.e., a family history of pathology).

Thus, the forensic diagnosis of psychopathology stood, in fact, for abnormality and deviance as such. Moreover, among the statistical categories available, this was the only one that did not express a motive or external context for the act, but established, diagnostically and forensically, a more general "underlying cause" (underdetermined and mysterious as it was). And this was why the majority of "child suicides," especially when there was no clearly established motive, came to be included in this latter category. What is more, even in the case of other verdicts, such as exam pressure or romantic troubles, it was understood that some kind of (loosely "psychological") pathology was still likely to be underpinning them. This kind of forensic diagnosis was commonly given by school doctors who thereby exculpated the school and the family of any responsibility, excused the police from pursuing the matter further, and allowed a decent burial in the religious tradition. "Child suicide" came to be understood as a pathological case by definition.⁸

And yet, diagnoses that referred to some inherent individual pathology were carried out side by side with overarching critiques of pernicious school

regimes, degenerating sociobiological conditions in families, and the moral-political crisis of Russian society, especially in the wake of the violent disturbances of 1905.⁹ These two moves coalesced into an ambiguous construction of the suicide child: on the one hand, child suicides appeared as woeful victims of external factors, vulnerable “organisms” suffering traumas inflicted upon them by a society in crisis and by social institutions not fit for purpose (above all the repressive school, but also the disintegrating family unit); on the other, they were embodiments of the pathological in society more generally; they were manifestations of “school suicides” in the abstract, which the educated society and professionals in particular took upon themselves to “struggle against.”¹⁰

This pattern of all-out “struggle” with a pathology on an epidemic scale, a pathology embodied by the stricken child population, will be repeated in other cases (for example, the “battle against delinquency” or the “fight against defectiveness” in the Soviet 1920s).¹¹ However, in the period between 1905 and the First World War, very little *actual* “struggle” was, or indeed could be, done against suicides.¹² Members of the professional intelligentsia formed the Commission for the Struggle against Schoolchild Suicides, but they had to admit that the best they could do was to research the phenomenon in terms of psychiatric expertise and moral statistics and to critique the general conditions of society and the character of institutions deemed responsible for the care of the children, namely the school and the family.¹³ It was usually understood that what was required for things to genuinely improve in such an extreme case as mass “child suicides” was the radical transformation of the very foundations of society. This did not mean that these professionals were calling for political revolution: what this discourse was doing was articulating and framing a normative crisis.

Vital to “the child” becoming the prime support of this discourse was the child’s ambiguous “otherness” from the fully developed and adequately socialized adult (the ideally formed member of the educated, professional middle class). In reality, many of the “children” committing suicides were youths who could be as old as twenty, and what qualified them as “children” was that they were most often still in high school.¹⁴ In the broadly evolutionist understanding, shared by most participants in these debates, especially doctors, “the child” could not be identified with the adult. It was a radically distinct category, presented as on a par with those affected by mental illness or forms of mental deficiency (“retardation”), with animals, or with the “primitive man.” Yet the concern that the educated public and the experts showed was above all for the suicides of schoolchildren in high school education—i.e., children of the very professional intelligentsia that was diagnosing, studying, and expressing

concern about this most troubling, fatal form of pathology. Indeed, “school-child suicides” became such a focal point of public anxiety because it made contradictory this highly articulate group’s idea(l)s of its very own biosocial self-(re)production and evolution as the empire’s pivotal social stratum.¹⁵

THE WAR CHILD, 1914–1917

During the First World War, public and professional interest in the epidemic of “child suicides” was replaced by a new moral panic—the effect that war, especially the new kind of total warfare, had on the psyche of the child.¹⁶ As with “child suicides,” the sense of “epidemic” was largely the effect of the proliferation of data on this topic and the ratcheting up of debate around it, both in the regular press and in more specialist publications, mostly educationalist ones. The concern was less with psychological “war wounds” and more with the transformations that the war appeared to be exercising on the children’s moral core. Yet the effect of the war on children’s moral being was construed largely in terms of its impact on their “psychology.”

The phenomenon of children being interested in military matters and “playing war” was hardly new.¹⁷ There were militaristic child organizations in Russia well before the First World War, and children’s interest in war had already been observed during the Russo-Japanese conflict in 1904. As early as 1914, children were being incorporated into Russia’s patriotic propaganda and featured regularly in it; they were recognized as an important part of the population to be mobilized into total war, literally (for military training or work in the rear) and symbolically (as valuable assets in displays of patriotism).¹⁸ There was even a sense that the spirit of war might be beneficial to children—rousing their love of the Fatherland and inspiring heroism in the case of the boys and inducing selfless dedication on the home front in the case of the girls.¹⁹

However, what very soon started to concern Russian professionals (especially teachers, but also some psychologists and psychiatrists) was increasing evidence of the children’s apparently unusual degree of curiosity about, uncritical fascination with, and strong attraction to wartime violence, as presented to them by the media of the day: the newspapers, illustrated journals, popular readings, pamphlets, posters, satirical cartoons, and postcards.²⁰ Children’s war games and war rhetoric became highly disturbing to commentators: they appeared as gross perversions of the romanticization of both war and childhood—an effect generated by their very combination.

Naturally, children’s actual responses to and engagements with the war were highly varied, but the intelligentsia became obsessed with the idea of children being somehow fundamentally transformed by war, even “possessed”

by it, acting as if in a state of hypnosis or intoxication. Public concern with the "militarization of childhood" started with anecdotal reports, but soon led to more systematic studies carried out by teacher organizations as well as by psychologists specializing in the study of childhood (e.g., M. M. Rubinshtein). They all used as their main methodology questionnaires on children's reading practices, personal interests, and worldviews, but they also collected and analyzed children's drawings, diaries, and schoolwork.²¹

The war gave new focus, relevance, and impetus to these methodologies of "child study," which had been pioneered in the United States by G. Stanley Hall.²² Psychologists, teachers, and parents involved in this strand of the movement in Russia keenly observed, noted, and commented on the war-related changes in the behavior of the children in their care, changes in the topics of their conversations, in the character of their games, in the subjects of their artwork, in the discourse of their school essays. They were fascinated by the children's remarkable susceptibility to propaganda messages and imagery, especially their tendency to take these messages too literally or too far. They took all this as evidence of the distinctive character (the aforementioned "otherness") of the child psyche, one that required careful professional handling, rooted in emergent specialist knowledge.

It was argued that wartime propaganda and media reporting seemed to lead children away from the healthy path of emotional, moral, and civilizational development that the educators were hoping to instill in them. The primary worry was that exposure to war imagery was awakening in children base instincts such as cruelty and violence, divesting them of a sense of right and wrong (for instance, when it came to inflicting pain on whoever or whatever represented the hated "Germans" in their games). It was regularly suggested that children seemed more chauvinistic and violent than adults, even in play (taking it out on the weakest among them or abusing animals). They were presented as enjoying mock executions even more than mock battles. One could apparently observe these changes even in children who before the war showed quite the opposite inclinations and character traits, and girls seemed just as vicious and aggressive as boys.

Descriptions of children in areas near the front line, in Ukraine, referred to similar disturbing transformations. They included, for example, reports on village children playing with the frozen corpses of enemy combatants that they would discover in the snow, inevitably desecrating them in the process. In this case, the emphasis of the observer was on the similarity that such acts had with the most natural of children's games, evidenced by the simple, innocent enjoyment that the children displayed as they played with the corpse. The "war

child" and its "games" emerge here as inherently uncanny (in the Freudian sense)—unsettling in their combination of familiarity and alien-ness.²³

Russia's professional intelligentsia (and the education profession in particular) saw their vocation as the raising of future builders of civilization in their own image. Yet in conditions of war, "children" were turned into a terrifying image of the inherent collapsibility of the very foundations of civilization; it was in the children that the ideals of civilized humanity seemed to decline first. And as with the "suicide child," the stakes were greater than the fate of the children themselves. The concern with children's souls was largely an enactment of the more general terror of the breakdown and the hope of the renewal of norms in the context of their crumbling in the midst of wartime destruction. As expressed by one of Russia's many commentators on the effects of war on children:

The present war, with all its terrible features, is preoccupying people's thoughts and feelings. It has also penetrated our elementary schools, and has completely gripped the lively and impressionable minds of children. The lessons of human history show us that war degrades people and stimulates bestial feelings in man. The present generation of children, finding itself surrounded by profound experiences, will feel itself under the power of the events it is living through for the rest of its life. There is no doubt that the Great World War will show us new paths to life, and right now we must prepare ourselves for new, more viable educational principles.²⁴

THE DELINQUENT CHILD, 1917–1924

The First World War already saw growing numbers of displaced and orphaned children who found themselves outside parental care, education, or work, roaming the streets and engaging in delinquent and criminal behavior, including begging, theft, and prostitution. The situation was greatly exacerbated by the two 1917 revolutions and the ensuing civil war. Estimates for 1921–22, the worst years due to a bout of famine in the Volga region, went up to several million displaced children, with figures then dropping to below half a million by 1923, and lower still from then on (although statistics for this kind of phenomenon are notoriously unreliable).²⁵ The problem of the so-called *besprizorniki* (literally, "the unsupervised"), the masses of homeless waifs, emerged as one of the key areas of population-wide intervention of the young Soviet state.

This issue played a major part in the establishment of new welfare structures in the midst and the immediate aftermath of revolutionary upheaval and war communism, involving practices which combined police, bureaucratic, medical, juridical, educational, and social welfare measures. Different Commissariats, especially those of education and health, as well as the police,

engaged with the problem, setting up a number of specialized commissions and other bodies to deal with it. The key measures were the (usually forcible) removal of unsupervised children from the streets; their medical, psychological, and pedagogical assessment; and then their placement in institutions for rehabilitation, resocialization, therapy, or correction. An extensive system of receivers, observation-distribution points, and specialized children's homes, communes, clinics, reformatories, schools, and labor placements were created. They varied in their regimes, practices, and levels of care depending on location or on the Commissariat they belonged to. Most of them suffered from a dire lack of resources and staff. Overall, rehabilitation included a combination of hygiene measures and different forms of disciplinary civilizing through which the children were expected to be turned into a literate, socially useful, morally responsible, and politically informed labor force.

Within a very short period of time, the phenomenon of the *besprizorniki* turned "children" as a category into a target of state intervention on a truly mass scale, something unprecedented in the history of Russian statehood. Prior to 1917, the "children of the nation" were, in practice, a rather narrow category. The latter's normative core was the children of the urban, (more or less) educated classes—the limited constituency of those who went to school, and above all those who were expected to go on to at least some form of secondary education. The scale of wartime and revolutionary upheaval, which produced the hordes of *besprizorniki*, radically transformed "children" as a target group of professional intervention and study, now actively overseen by the new socialist state. Furthermore, the *besprizorniki*, understood as a by-product of the violent downfall of the long-compromised *ancien régime*, became the principal support for extensive normative reframing in the first years of Soviet power. Put differently, in the context of the Russian civil war and its aftermath, the *besprizorniki* emerged as the category that, temporarily, established a new core of "the children of the nation"; they did so by exemplifying the normative crisis brought about by the violent upheavals of war and revolution, prompting, however, for this very reason, their pathologization.

The treatment of the *besprizorniki* in this period of postrevolutionary crisis was built on Russia's experiences in the treatment of juvenile offenders and delinquents from the prerevolutionary era.²⁶ Already prior to 1917, there was pressure from emerging experts in criminal anthropology (especially Dmitrii Dril) to introduce into colonies for young offenders what was referred to as "medico-pedagogical supervision" (*mediko-pedagogicheskii nadzor*), to be headed by psychiatrists.²⁷ The idea of "corruptedness" (*isporchenost* or *porochnost*, both associated with *porok*, meaning "vice"), which dominated discourse on juvenile

delinquency in the late nineteenth century, was modulated in a medical key. Increasing numbers of delinquent children were seen as suffering from different forms of psychopathology, including that of “moral defectiveness” (*moral’naia defektivnost’*), understood as a pathological absence of the ability to distinguish right from wrong.²⁸ Between 1900 and the 1910s, key psychiatric and psychological societies in both Moscow and St. Petersburg were commissioned to advise juvenile correctional facilities. Some Russian psychiatrists started to see these institutions as loci of valuable psychiatric material as well as sites for developing new research methodologies. However, in tsarist times, juvenile colonies and shelters were, firstly, marginal institutions, and secondly, their medicalization took place in the context of research and diagnostic theory, while there was little or no psychiatric intervention in the correction or treatment of inmates.

Important, ideologically motivated changes in the tackling of delinquency as a social problem took place soon after the Bolshevik coup in October 1917.²⁹ In 1918, the new powers published the decree “On Commissions for Juvenile Affairs,” which eliminated both courts and prisons for juveniles. From then on, young offenders were expected to be brought to these new commissions, and the latter were then to refer them to educational or medical establishments rather than places of detention. These commissions’ membership was expected to include a psychiatrist, an educator, and a magistrate, as well as social workers. The 1918 decree itself did not use the term “morally defective,” but the unpublished rationale produced by the commission featured this label as its key term.³⁰ What is more, the government (Sovnarkom) decree of March 4, 1920, “On the Matter of Juveniles Accused of Socially-dangerous Acts” radically widened the meaning of “moral defectiveness.” While in the tsarist era this term was used as merely one, quite specific, pathological category of young offenders, it now became a default term for juvenile deviance, specifically in the context of the surge of *besprizornost’*.³¹ The notion of “moral defectiveness” was intentionally broad and could be flexibly subdivided into different kinds and levels of “pathology,” leading to a variety of possible “treatments.”

Article 7 of the decree of March 4, 1920, stated: “The upbringing, training and treatment [*lechenie*] of morally defective juveniles accused of socially-dangerous acts is a medico-educational task carried out by the Commissariats of Education and Health in suitable medico-educational establishments [*lechebno-vospitatel’nye uchrezhdeniia*], to which they are to be referred to by the Commissions for Juvenile Affairs.”³² Thus, what in the tsarist era used to be called “correctional-educational” (*ispravitel’no-vospitatel’nye*) facilities now became “medico-educational” ones. Young offenders were no longer branded “juvenile offenders” (*maloletnie prestupniki*), a term that referred to the criminal

act, but “morally defective” or “ethically backward” (*moral’no-defektivnye* and *eticheski otstalye*), terms that identified an inherent pathology or deviance in the offender. Moreover, the “struggle with *besprizornost’*” was made to overlap with the “struggle with defectiveness,” the latter referring to a whole range of mental and physical “deficiencies,” all lumped together into the target of a multipronged (and rather chaotic) system of state intervention focused on the pathological and the deviant in the child population. In this context, the “defectologist-teacher” became a key specialism alongside the doctor.³³

However, other, rather more euphemistic labels, such as “exceptional childhood” (*iskliuchitel’noe detstvo*) and “difficult childhood” (*trudnoe detstvo*), were also used on a regular basis.³⁴ Such phrasings and their elaborations and justifications invariably referred to a *de facto* context of “trauma,” with the children in question appearing as victims of external circumstances. The phrase “victims of *besprizornost’*” was also used. Yet these terms could still be easily transposed into labels that applied forms of deviance or pathology onto the children themselves, by describing *them* rather than their childhoods as inherently “difficult” or at least “difficult to educate/socialize” (*trudnovospituemye*).³⁵

The range of issues that these children were affected by and displaying was, in reality, broad and varied. At the First All-Russian Conference for the Struggle with Child Defectiveness in 1921, different types of care institutions were being proposed, depending on which category of “difficulty” the child belonged to: how they responded to educational measures; whether they required isolation; how much medical, especially psychiatric, expertise was necessary; and how difficult they were to manage and discipline. In most cases it was the regime of daily life at the institution in question that was deemed to have the core therapeutic/rehabilitative function, the idea being especially to rebalance the delinquent child’s “will,” diagnosed as over- or underdeveloped.

When the situation was exacerbated by the 1921 famine, which caused huge flows of refugees from the affected areas, mostly the Volga provinces, starvation became a key case for the ambiguous fusion of trauma and pathology in expert discourse on the *besprizorniki*. Doctors, in particular, sought to connect the trauma of “exceptional childhood,” as experienced by the starving *besprizorniki*, with the pathology of “moral defectiveness.” There was considerable interest among psychiatrists in how hunger transformed normal psychological development. It was argued that protracted periods of starvation directly affected basic biological instincts, transforming the entire personality, including the stunting and disabling of the child’s moral senses.³⁶

Yet by 1924 the numbers of the *besprizorniki* were in decline: *besprizornost’* as an “epidemic” started to look eradicable. This had a direct effect on how

besprizornost' itself was framed as an object of state intervention. The First Moscow Conference for the Struggle with *Besprizornost'* (March 16–17, 1924) challenged the label “morally defective,” bringing about its official rejection.³⁷ Nonetheless, the openness and vagueness of what had been entailed by this term allowed for its tacit survival in practice, both among those who, as professionals, dealt with delinquents on a daily basis, and among the general public.³⁸ What was being purged in the elimination of the term “moral defective” from official discourse was only the sense of *inherent* deviance, *not* that of “pathology.” The revision of terminology expressed mostly the regained optimistic view (one which reflected the real decline in the numbers of *besprizorniki*) that these children could, as a population at least, be successfully treated and rehabilitated. Yet this did not remove the idea that they (or at least an exemplary core among them) were physically unhealthy, constitutionally weak, with a deficient “personality,” their “pathology” being construed mostly as abnormal reactions to environmental stimuli.

In fact, the era of the New Economic Policy (NEP; 1921–28), which implied a grudging “tactical retreat” by the Bolsheviks from the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat to a mixed economy that permitted the return of small-scale capitalism, was marked by continued anxieties about the morally unstable and ideologically problematic context for the building of a new society, including fears of rising criminality and degeneration.³⁹ The conditions of precarious revolutionary transformation, characteristic of the 1920s, were haunted by a continued sense of social crisis and normative ambiguity. It is this crisis, born of a revolutionary utopia under the threat of collapse, that the Bolsheviks were responding to by turning the country’s juvenile population into one of the principal “supports” for the construction of a new normative model—the “New Soviet Person” as an idealized representation of the future emancipated, conscious, and psychophysiologically transformed socialist citizenry.⁴⁰

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MASS CHILD, 1924–1936

Furthermore, throughout the 1920s, the new socialist state was still wrestling with its internal “civilizing mission”—specifically the question of how best to organize mass education for large numbers of children nurtured within a population with very low preexisting levels of literacy and education. In this context, and especially in the effort to raise educational levels as rapidly as possible, the boundary between educational norms for children in the expanding network of regular schools and those attending special schools became porous: new, progressive, and experimental forms of education that were being speedily introduced across Soviet schools by leading Bolshevik educational reformists

overlapped with forms of education originally developed as techniques of special pedagogy for the “defective.”⁴¹ This included the abolition of fixed curricula and textbooks; learning conceptualized as real-life exploration; and emphasis on practical, especially labor, activities.

These developments need to be viewed in the context of the revolutionary transformation of the overall composition of the country’s body politic, which under socialism came to include, in principle at least, the totality of the former empire’s population. This in and of itself had a huge impact on normative conceptions of child development and socialization. Such a seismic shift of the population of concern prompted a significant normative reframing of “children” as targets of intervention, i.e., a performative rearticulation of norms of development and socialization, with considerable implications on how upbringing, schooling, and welfare were to be organized in the new society. This was juxtaposed with the ideologically grounded idealization of the “laboring classes” as the new bearers of biosocial norms—hence the emphasis in educational practice on emulating the material and collective world of work.

By the late 1920s, and especially with the Soviet government’s push towards the full implementation of universal schooling (planned for some time, but decreed only in 1930, in the context of the first five-year plan), central to educationalist research into the Soviet child population became the notion of the “mass child” (*massovyi rebenok*).⁴² A statistical as well as a rhetorical creature, the “mass child” was a normative articulation, in the singular, of the (now total) Soviet schoolchild population. This notion was rooted in the positivist conception of the norm as a statistical average and emerged in the context of the remarkable expansion of mass mental and scholastic testing in the Soviet 1920s (much of it American in inspiration).⁴³

Around 1927–28 the “mass child” was defined as the prime object of pedology (in Russian *pedologiya*)—the cross-disciplinary “science of the child,” which had been supported by the Bolshevik political elite throughout the 1920s as a framework for all research related to children, and which was by the end of the decade inaugurated as an official science entrusted with managing the process of the state’s implementation of universal education.⁴⁴ In 1928 the Commissariat of Education introduced the so-called pedology service across Soviet schools, deploying it as a tool for managing educational expansion. This involved the appointment of school pedologists (a large percentage of whom were doctors) whose task was to assess and stream the school population, referring those “below the norm” to a proliferating number of special schools.⁴⁵ The number of these referrals grew to such an extent, however, that in the summer of 1936 the Communist Party resolved to close down the program by a radical measure—a

Party decree that proclaimed pedology itself a pernicious, classist, and racist pseudoscience that had erroneously over-diagnosed subnormality in the Soviet population, especially among the children of workers and ethnic minorities.⁴⁶

What is important to note here is that those assessed as falling below the norm in the late 1920s to the early 1930s were being defined as such in relation to the concept of the “mass child.” In other words, the “subnormal” children were a function of the construction of a purported universal average for the now vastly expanded, in principle total, Soviet schoolchild population. This new “subnormal” child at times resembled and often overlapped with earlier forms, insofar as these children were often labeled by teachers, school doctors, and pedologists as “defective” or “difficult to educate.” However, this form of “subnormality,” which rose to prominence between 1924 and 1936 as part of a rapid expansion of the population of concern within the newly constructed school system, and as an effect and function of a statistically defined norm, should *not* be identified with the above-discussed, very different, constructs of child deviance and pathology that emerged in the period between 1905 and 1924—namely, the “suicide child,” the “war child,” and the “delinquent child.” In these latter cases, the abnormal or the deviant arose, by contrast, from the ambiguous fusion of trauma and pathology associated with “exceptional childhoods,” understood as outcomes of massive societal shocks in the form of war and revolution.

CONCLUSION: TRAUMA AND PATHOLOGY IN CONDITIONS OF NORMATIVE CRISIS

Violent ruptures, such as wars and revolutions, are commonly treated as events exercising a “traumatic” effect on a given population.⁴⁷ “Collective trauma” is usually seen as paralleling and translating into individual trauma, and vice versa, often problematically so. However, what is affected by collective upheavals are not only the human beings caught up in the events in question; in the case of children, it is also not straightforwardly their (“natural”) physical, psychological, or social “development” that is disrupted by said events and experiences. What is being upturned is the very (socially, historically, and culturally specific) normative regime (the overarching set of institutions, discourses, and practices) that frames the “right,” “healthy” path of biopsychosocial “development” and “life” more generally.⁴⁸

In such circumstances, both the diagnostics of trauma and the therapeutics of healing, rehabilitation, and resocialization can be viewed as enactments of a normative regime in crisis. “Trauma” is here not simply a “wound” (whether collective or individual) to be healed; it is a sign of normative collapse.

Moreover, the recovery of a normative regime is not just a matter of “healing the wound.” The (re)instatement or (re)forging of the norm assumes the (re)establishment of the distinction between “right” and “wrong,” and that is contingent on the reassertion of pathology. In fact, the recovery of a normative regime in crisis, in conditions of “trauma,” generates, of necessity, partial and strategic pathologizations of both the individuals and the population at large caught up in and affected by the cataclysmic events. This renders the connection between “trauma,” as a sign of normative collapse, and “pathology,” as a means of the recovery of the norm, intimate, yet ambiguous. However, it is precisely the distinction and connection between “trauma” and “pathology” that then determines the paths, means, and meanings of rehabilitation, healing, and resocialization in the aftermath of societal shocks.

During the dramatic sociopolitical upheavals of the first quarter of the twentieth century in Russia, including the 1905 revolution, the First World War, the revolutions of 1917, and the civil war, children acquired a vital role in Russian society’s efforts to overcome a succession of normative crises resulting from these events. Children became important not only as foci of public interest and mass intervention, but also, and especially, as objects of knowledge-power associated with sciences and professions focused on the articulation and enactment of biological, psychological, and social norms—“norms of life” in the terms of the philosopher of the human sciences and medicine, Georges Canguilhem.⁴⁹

In conditions of normative crisis, such as those described above, the role of “the child” was dual. On the one hand, “the child” was identified with the very breakdown of norms: it was turned into a symbol and embodiment of normative failure; it became a figure of “regression” (e.g., “the moral defective”). Yet “the child” could also simultaneously be turned into an emblem of a lost or longed-for normative ideal: this could be a set of norms that had supposedly been forsaken in the “fall” and require reinstatement (as in the Tolstoyan, romantic “free education” movement, influential in early twentieth-century Russian and Soviet pedagogy) or norms that are to be forged anew, as if from scratch (e.g., in the idea of the “New Soviet Person” in Bolshevik utopianism).⁵⁰ What turned “the child” into such a key figure in this context was its *normative ambiguity*. Indeed, one of the key dichotomies in the history of adult constructions of childhood more generally was that of depravity versus innocence: childhood has historically been cast as a moment of both purity and immorality, both vulnerability and criminality; the child was both a “tabula rasa” and a “little savage.”⁵¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, “the child” had, as an object of study, intervention, and care, been treated primarily as a function of biosocial

reproduction and hence also of the adults' self-reflection. The sense in which the child was a human being "in formation" was that an idealized (normal, healthy, balanced, civilized) adult (invariably the adult of a particular class) was posited as the norm that the child was expected to teleologically transform into, or rather (re)produce. Yet this made "the child" not just a function of the definition of this norm, but also a figure of its fundamental precariousness—of the uncertainty, the non-given-ness of the "healthy" path of "development." It was in conditions of wider social collapse, in events such as wars and revolutions, that this precariousness came to the fore and that children were foregrounded as its embodiments, prompting not just intervention, but also pathologizations focused on them. Moreover, as an object of diagnosis and treatment (through which norms were rearticulated), "the child" became a function of the reconstruction of the norms upturned by the exceptional, violent events. "The child" served both as a strange "other" to the adult and, at the same time, as an imagined core of the adult's "self."

The "epidemic" of child suicides diagnosed in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution, the concern with war's transformative psychological effect on children during the First World War, and the early 1920s' treatment of mass child "delinquency" after the upheavals of revolution and civil war are key cases of the construction of child pathology as a society-wide phenomenon, to be targeted by larger-scale scientific and professional engagements. They demonstrate gradual progression in the expansion of the population of concern from the high school teenage suicide, via the broader (especially in terms of age) and less clearly defined group of children affected by war, to the mass phenomenon of postwar child delinquency. Even more important than the increasing size of the population in question was the shifting normative core of those who counted as the "children of the nation," on whom scientific, professional, and public/state intervention was focused.

In each case, though, the children in question, as major supports for normative discourses and practices, came to be identified with the pathological as such. And in each case, there was an ambiguous fusion of deviance/pathology, on the one hand, and victimhood/trauma, on the other. In the case of the "epidemic" of child suicides, this was produced through a combination of (a) diagnoses of individual pathology tied to concrete suicide cases; (b) statistical work focused on a particular (high school) population; and (c) politicized critiques of pernicious school regimes, degenerating family conditions, and the sociopolitical crisis more generally. The population that this discourse focused on was, crucially, the children of the very professional intelligentsia that was diagnosing and "fighting" (the reified idea of) the "child suicide epidemic." The "suicide

child" emerges therefore as emblematic of the crisis of this group's biosocial reproduction in the conditions of sociopolitical upheaval during and after 1905.

In the second case—the heightened public and professional concern with the effects of war on the psyche of the child during the First World War—the "otherness" of the child's psyche, which was part of the articulation of the crisis of the professional intelligentsia's own self-understanding as an agent of social progress and builder of civilization, was crucial. There was again ambiguity as to whether children were, due to their vulnerability, to be considered the first victims of war's inhumanity and their actions thus the manifestation of a form of "traumatization," or whether, on the contrary, the behavior of children in these circumstances needed to be pathologized as one of the first symptoms of civilization's collapsibility.

Between 1917 and 1924 the phenomenon of the *besprizorniki* became the principal support for normative reframing; they were the category that, paradoxically, emerged as a new core of the nation's children by exemplifying the social and normative crisis brought about by war and revolution; this in turn prompted their pathologization (above all through the emblematic figure of "the moral defective") as part of reestablishing a new normative regime on the ruins of the old one, which, being associated with tsarism, was perceived as having collapsed on itself through its own internal contradictions.

From the mid-1920s, in the young Soviet state's efforts to rapidly raise the country's educational levels, attention was turned onto the now expanded population of schoolchildren who were entering the education system. In this context, the norms—developmental and educational—through which this new schoolchild population was to be framed, were still in flux and ill-established. However, the continuing normative crisis was at this point no longer the effect of the shock of extrinsic violent events, but of the accelerated expansion of the population of concern. Forms of "subnormality" generated in the context of the late 1920s' push towards the full implementation of universal schooling (in relation to the notion of the "mass child," rooted in a positivist conception of the statistical average) differed radically from earlier constructs of child pathology which were, by contrast, associated with moments of societal shock and were produced as functions of particular instances of "collective trauma." In these earlier cases "the child" became a fundamentally disconcerting figure, victim and deviant at the same time, situated at the center of a complex and ambiguous web of discourses, practices, and institutions generated in and by conditions of normative collapse, which themselves were conducive to the forging of new powers associated with quite particular, twentieth-century forms of both statehood and science.

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NOTES

1. David L. Hoffman, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).
2. What follows is indebted to the detailed examination of this case in Aleksandr B. Liarskii, *Samoubiistva uhashchikhsia kak fenomen sotsializatsii v Rossii na rubezhe XIX–XX vekov* (St. Petersburg: MIEP, 2010). See also chapter 11 in Susan K. Morrissey, *Suicide and the Body Politic in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
3. Liarskii, *Samoubiistva uhashchikhsia*, 22–50.
4. Evgenii M. Balashov, *Shkola v rossiiskom obshchestve 1917–1927 gg.: Stanovlenie “novo-go cheloveka”* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2003), 46.
5. Andy Byford, “Roditel’, uchitel’ i vrach: k istorii ikh vzaimootnoshenii v dele vospitaniia i obrazovaniia v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii,” *Novye rossiiskie gumanitarnye issledovaniia* 8 (2013); <http://www.nrgumis.ru/>.
6. On discourses of “degeneration” in Russia at this historical juncture see Daniel Beer, *Renovating Russia: The Human Sciences and the Fate of Liberal Modernity, 1880–1930* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008).
7. Liarskii, *Samoubiistva uhashchikhsia*, 51–108.
8. Liarskii, *Samoubiistva uhashchikhsia*, 59–98.
9. In this context “schoolchild suicides” paralleled “hooliganism” as another highly media-tized “social pathology” of this era that was being explained with social degeneration in the wake of revolutionary violence. See Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Power and Culture in St. Petersburg, 1900–1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).
10. See, for example, D. Nikol’skii, “O shkol’nykh samoubiistvakh. Pis’mo v redaktsiiu,” *Svobodnoe vospitanie* no. 11 (1910–11): 93–96.
11. See also Marina Goloviznina, “Politika sotsial’nogo kontrolia prestupnosti nesovershenno-letnikh v SSSR (1917– konets 1980–kh gg.),” *Zhurnal issledovaniia sotsial’noi politiki* 3, no. 2 (2005): 223–40.

12. For exceptions, e.g., psychiatrists who reported cases of successful psychotherapeutic interventions that supposedly prevented suicide in those at risk, see Ivan A. Sikorskii, *Psikhologicheskaia bor'ba s samoubiistvom v iunye gody* (Kiev: Tip. tov. I. N. Kusherev, 1913).
13. Liarskii, *Samoubiistva uchashchikhsia*, 109–36.
14. For a more general discussion of the “boundaries of childhood” in late Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, with a focus on the shifting, context-dependent, sometimes formally institutionalized, but often also hazy, dividing line between “childhood” and “youth,” see Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 16–17. The early twentieth-century public debates on “child suicides” thrived on blurring this boundary.
15. Liarskii, *Samoubiistva uchashchikhsia*, 137–210.
16. Aaron J. Cohen, “Flowers of Evil: Mass Media, Child Psychology, and the Struggle for Russia's Future during the First World War,” in *Children and War: A Historical Anthology*, ed. James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 38–49.
17. See especially Alla A. Sal'nikova, *Rossiiskoe detstvo v XX veke: Istoriia, teoriia i praktika issledovaniia* (Kazan': Kazanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2007), 142–67.
18. P. P. Shcherbinin, “Detskaia povsednevnost' v evropeiskikh gosudarstvakh v period Pervoi mirovoi voiny, 1914–1918 gg.,” in *Maloletnie poddanye bol'shoi imperii* (Moscow: RGGU, 2012), 197–210.
19. Matthias Neumann, “Mobilizing Children: Youth and the Patriotic War Culture in Kiev during World War I,” in *Russia's Great War and Revolution, 1914–1922. Book 2: The Experience of War and Revolution*, eds. Adele Lindenmeyr, Christopher Read, and Peter Waldron (Bloomington: Slavica, 2016), 273–300.
20. Cohen, “Flowers of Evil.”
21. On what follows see especially Cohen, “Flowers of Evil”; Neumann, “Mobilizing Children”; and Sal'nikova, *Rossiiskoe detstvo*.
22. Alice Boardman Smuts, *Science in the Service of Children, 1893–1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
23. Sal'nikova, *Rossiiskoe detstvo*, 162, with reference to S. Levitin's article “Deti i voina” (“Children and War”) published in the pedagogical journal *Russkaia shkola* (*Russian School*) in the summer of 1915 (Levitin quotes a first-hand witness). For further context on childhood experiences of war in the Ukrainian borderlands, see Neumann, “Mobilizing Childhood.”
24. Quoted from Neumann, “Mobilizing Childhood,” 277. Neumann cites one of the educators engaged in the study of this phenomenon at the time (T. Lubenets, “Voina i shkol'niki,” *Shkola i zhizn'* no. 7 [1915]: 2; translation Neumann's).
25. See especially Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul Is Hardened: Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and Dorena Caroli, *L'enfance abandonnée et délinquance dans la Russie soviétique, 1917–1937* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004).

26. Kelly, *Children's World*, 182–90. L. I. Beliaeva, *Stanovlenie i razvitie ispravitel'nykh zavedenii dlia nesovershennoletnikh pravonarushitelei v Rossii (seredina XIX—nachalo XX vv.)* (Moscow: Akademiia MVD Rossii, 1995).
27. Dmitrii A. Dril', *Maloletnie prestupniki*, 2 vols. (Moscow: A. I. Mamontov, 1884, 1888). Dmitrii A. Dril', "Nashi ispravitel'no-vospitatel'nye zavedeniia i voprosy ispravitel'nogo vospitaniia," *Zhurnal ministerstva iustitsii* no. 8 (1898): 173–93; no. 9 (1898): 88–120; no. 10 (1898): 101–49. Dmitrii A. Dril', *O merakh bor'by s prestupnost'iu nesovershennoletnikh* (St. Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1908).
28. Pavel Bel'skii, "Prestupnost' i deti," *Psikhologiya i deti* no. 1 (1917): 41–51; no. 2 (1917): 48–56.
29. On what follows, see especially Iurii Iu. Bekhterev, "Samoupravlenie kak odna iz form ispravitel'no-trudovogo vozdeistviia na nesovershennoletnikh pravonarushitelei, lishennykh svobody," *Sovetskoe pravo* no. 2 (1926): 121–26.
30. Bekhterev, "Samoupravlenie," 121.
31. Bekhterev, "Samoupravlenie," 121.
32. Cited in Bekhterev "Samoupravlenie," 121–22; translation mine.
33. Bekhterev, "Samoupravlenie," 122.
34. Vsevolod P. Kashchenko and G. V. Murashev, *Pedologiya v pedagogicheskoi praktike: Pedagogicheskaiia klinika* (Moscow: Med.-ped. stantsiia Narkomprosa, 1926).
35. Goloviznina, "Politika sotsial'nogo kontroliia."
36. The influence of famine on the psyche of a developing child was discussed in the psychiatric section of the Moscow Psycho-neurology Congress in January 1923. See Polina O. Efrussi, *Uspekhi psikhologii v Rossii: Itogi s'ezda po psikhonevrologii v Moskve 10–15 ianvaria 1923 g.* (Petrograd: Nachatki znaniia, 1923), 13.
37. Bekhterev, "Samoupravlenie," 121.
38. Goloviznina, "Politika sotsial'nogo kontroliia."
39. Beer, *Renovating Russia*, 165–204.
40. On the politics of youth in the 1920s' Soviet Union, see Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
41. Vsevolod P. Kashchenko, ed., *Problemy izucheniia i vospitaniia rebenka* (Moscow, 1926): 6; 172. See also Kashchenko and Murashev, *Pedologiya v pedagogicheskoi praktike*.
42. V. P. Levinskii, "O statistike v pedologii," in *Metodika pedagogicheskogo obsledovaniia detei shkol'nogo vozrasta*, ed. Pavel P. Blonskii (Moscow and Leningrad: Gos. izd., 1927), 129–33. See also Alexandre Etkind, "L'essor et l'échec du mouvement paidologique: De la psychanalyse au 'nouvel homme de masse,'" *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 23 (1992): 387–418.
43. Andy Byford, "The Mental Test as a Boundary Object in Early-20th-Century Russian Child Science," *History of the Human Sciences* 27, no. 4 (2014): 22–58.

44. Evgenii M. Balashov, *Pedologiya v Rossii v pervoi tret'i XX veka* (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2012). P. Ia. Shvartsman and I. V. Kuznetsova, "Pedologiya," in *Repressirovanaia nauka*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1994), 121–39.
45. V. F. Baranov, "Pedologicheskaiia sluzhba v sovetskoii shkole 20–30-kh gg.," *Voprosy psikhologii* no. 4 (1991): 100–12.
46. On this particular case of the Stalinist clampdown in the Soviet human sciences, see A. M. Rodin, "Iz istorii zapreta pedologii v SSSR," *Pedagogika* no. 4 (1994): 94–95; Nikolai Kurek, *Istoriia likvidatsii pedologii i psikhotehniki* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2004); E. Thomas Ewing, "Restoring Teachers to Their Rights: Soviet Education and the 1936 Denunciation of Pedagogy," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2001): 471–93; Andy Byford, "Zagrobnaia zhizn' 'nauki' pedologii: k voprosu o znachenii 'nauchnykh dvizhenii' (i ikh istorii) dlia sovremennoi pedagogiki," *Prepodavatel': XXI vek* no. 1 (2013): 43–54.
47. Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).
48. Trauma Studies literature discusses collective trauma primarily as a matter of the collapse of identity (or "the self"), and consequent "healing" as the restoration of meaning through collective memory work. I here extend the analysis of "collective trauma" to the problem of the collapse and restoration of norms that frame the meanings and structures of "the self."
49. Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1991). On the importance of norms in the history of childhood, see André Turmel, *A Historical Sociology of Childhood: Developmental Thinking, Categorization and Graphic Visualization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
50. E.g., cf. Konstantin N. Venttsel', *Novye puti vospitaniia i obrazovaniia detei* (Moscow: Zemlia i fabrika, 1923); Raymond A. Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).
51. See especially Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (London: Polity Press, 2001) and Michel Foucault, "The Abnormals," in his *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 51–57.